Transformative Leadership for the 21st Century: Africa at Glance

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Abstract

21st century Africa is embroiled in problems that have stalled the developmental gains postulated in yesteryears. Conflict, poverty, ill-health and illiteracy continue in prevalence, jeopardizing the reversal of gains already made. Solutions to this stalemate are varied, but leadership is according to the most practical step in the direction to finding solutions. Leadership provides the path and bridge to finding solutions that fit the 21st century Africa. Leadership is supposed to be within the context of good governance, transparency, rule of law, private sector development, and respect for property rights, prudent macro-economic management and cognisance of the international community of states. This paper seeks to understand the meaning of leadership and examine the circumstances under which leadership has failed in Africa. It seeks to provide avenues within which transformative leadership can be realized in order to fill the gap in development.

Key Words: *Leadership/Development/Solutions*

1.0. Introduction

The definition of leadership varies in context and understanding (Montuori. 2010: 1). McCloskey (2009:3) defines leadership as the art and science of taking individuals and communities to a new and better place. Transformative leadership can be defined as the process of changing the existent way of livelihoods to new and better ways, as and of when the need arises. Rylander (2010: 1) describes transformational leadership as enhancing the motivation, morale, and job performance of followers through a variety of mechanisms that include connecting the follower's sense of identity and self to the project and the collective identity of the organization; being a role model for followers that inspires them and makes them interested; challenging followers to take greater ownership for their work, and understanding the strengths and weaknesses of followers, so the leader can align followers with tasks that enhance their performance.

Transformational leadership as a concept was introduced by leadership expert James McGregor Burns. He described it as when "leaders and followers making each other advance to a higher level of morality and motivation," and that they are idealized in the sense that they are a moral exemplar of working towards the benefit of the team, organization and/or community (Rylander 2010: 1).

Bernard M. Bass, Sahgal & Pathak (2007: 264) explains further expanded upon Burns' original ideas to develop what is today referred to as Bass' *Transformational Leadership Theory*. They explain further that according to Bass, transformational leadership can be defined based on the impact that it has on followers and that transformational leaders garner trust, respect, and admiration from their followers

Yukl (1994) draws some tips for transformational leadership as;

1. Developing a challenging and attractive vision, together with the employees.
2. Tying the vision to a strategy for its achievement.
3. Developing the vision, specifying and translating it to actions.
4. Expressing confidence, decisiveness and optimism about the vision and its implementation.
5. Realizing the vision through small planned steps and small successes in the path for its full implementation.

2.0. Model of Transformational Leadership

McCloskey by basing on biblical theology and transformational theory introduces the 4-R Model and identifies four critical leadership variables. The 4-R Model pictures transformational leadership as beginning with our **Relationships**, overflowing into community leadership **Roles**, calling upon the leader to exercise specific leadership **Responsibilities** and eventually producing contextually defined **Results**. The 4-R Model assumes that if we want to understand how the process of leadership works, we must begin with the person doing the leading. This assumption is derived from biblical theology as well as transformational theory (McCloskey, 2009:2)

Figure 1: The 4-R Model

Results
Responsibilities
Roles
Relationships
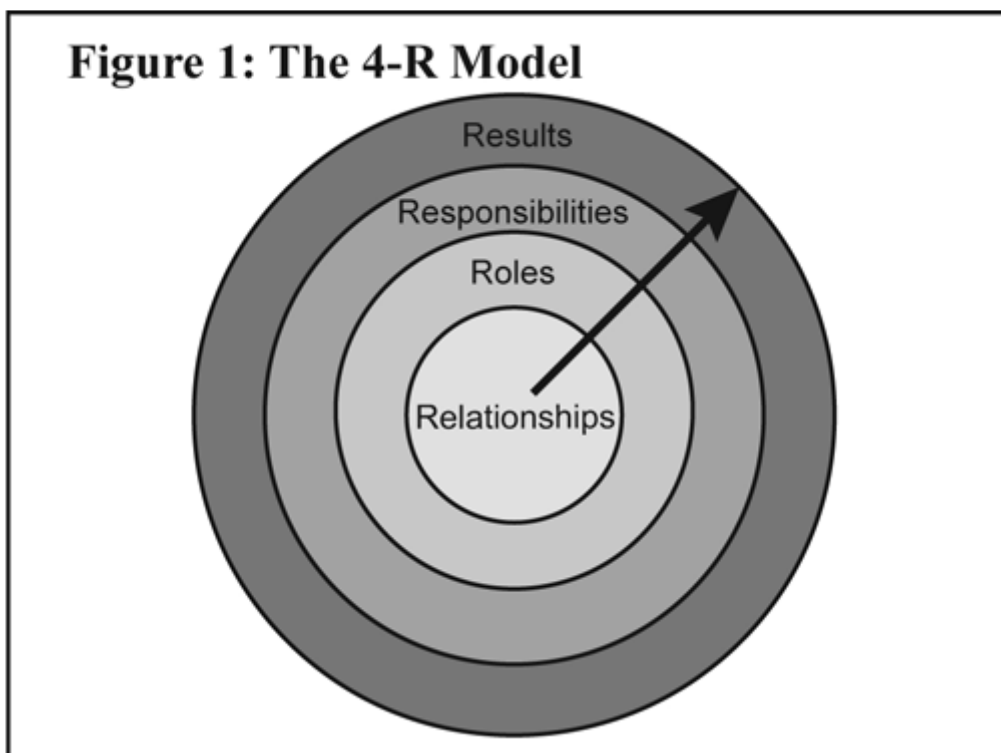
Source: (McCloskey, 2009: 2)

3.0. Methodological Conceptualization

The authors in trying to access relevant and current literature employed analytical qualitative design. The literatures were critically analyzed and conclusions made based on the relevancy of the source to the topic.

4.0. Leadership and development in Africa

Today Africa is averagely 50 years old. It is the least developed continent in the world yet it boasts of having the largest deposits of natural resources that if tapped can turn the tide of poverty in Africa. Leadership as noted is the pathway to attaining this desired goal. In this almost 50 years, there have been exemplary leaders including Kwame Nkrumah, Patrice Lumumba and Abdel Nasser in the political landscape and thousands more in other sectors across Africa. However, a larger number of bad leaders have been in existence including dictators like Idi Amin and Mobuto Sesseseko. What is the difference between this set of leaders? How was their leadership style and what environment made it either progressive or retrogressive?

4.1. Philosophy of Leadership; "Cultural" Perception of Leadership

The philosophy behind doing this a certain way is imperative in the understanding of leadership styles in Africa. It describes the circumstances behind the establishment of authoritarian or democratic regimes. Leadership in Africa has for a long time been built on cultural stand points that date to the early stages of the establishment of administrative systems in Africa (Nwadike, 2011: 1). These cultural beliefs elevate certain principles that streamline leadership in the context of quality, individuality, perception, power distribution and effect on other related agenda such as economics and human development. It is important to note that traditional Africa was based on clan-based administration under the broader chiefdom/kingdom system structure (Warioba, 2006: 1, 4, 6). It determined who ruled, how and in what circumstance. Today's Africa is different, thanks to the entry of colonialism and the establishment of western state administrative systems. This new structure has been difficult to adopt to since change in first naturally difficult and secondly the circumstantial relationships between Africa and the west are from time to time strained owing to the rejection of the latter's imperialistic control.

In a similar context, the role of women and the youth in leadership is dictated by this philosophy (Montuori, 2010; 6: Nebe, 2012: 77, 82). Traditionally, these two were not part of the leadership equation due to the division of roles and duties starting all the way from the family to the society. This has been succeeded into today's African leadership philosophy to a point where even the introduction of laws is not much helpful as is the case in Kenya after the adoption of the new constitution of 2010.

4.2. Regime Analysis

As Rylands points out on what a leader should do, particular on maintaining good governance and transparency, preserving rule of law, encouraging private sector development and having respect for property rights, employing prudent macro-economic management and cognisance of the international community of states (Rylander, 2010: ii), it dawns on everyone who scrutinizes African leaders that most these are broken. While a leader as an individual may try the best they can, the system in place may not give them the opportunity they need. Most regimes in Africa are weak (Juma and Oluoch, 2013: 11). The existence of weak states makes leadership a nightmare. From conflict that are protracted to prevalence of deadly diseases, porous borders to existence of armed militia, rebels or terrorists, under-infrastructure to the wide gap between the rich and the poor, negative ethnicity to illiteracy, un-professional military and mega corruption; the list goes on, all exist in almost all African countries. The cycle of weakness that exists in a country spreads to the entire region in way or another as is the case in the Horn of Africa in the context of insecurity emanating from Somalia. In such a case, leaders in these countries have to do more than double to remedy the situation include cooperating with other international partners of development to bring transformation.

These problems according to Juma and Oluoch (2013:13) emanate from the cold war and the repercussions are being felt today, after the leaders of the time made wrong decisions, based on protecting their interests, single party system and monopoly over their distracters in exchange of patronage so as to remain in power. Constitutions were amended to legitimize their decisions and so much damage done that in various countries like Rwanda, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Central African Republic, Mali, Somalia and Angola the impact is still being felt today. It has taken African leaders of today so much effort to transform some of these countries such as Rwanda under President Paul Kagame (Khadiagala, 2009:433).

4.3. Web of Political Confusion

The ideal political system that the majority of countries strive for is democracy. Democracy is praised as the best political system and foreign policies augmented around it so as to influence non-democratic countries to join the bandwagon. African countries are naturally trying to adopt democracy owing to the fact that it is a new form of political management. In this struggle, Africa has made numerous mistakes, making the assertion that maybe after all, democracy has no place in the continent. Today, the manner with which democracy is practised has brought more confusion than the previous authoritarian regimes did (Warioba, 2006:6). From political parties to trade unions, cooperative societies to civil societies, confusion is the order of the day. There is a lack of leadership under this system and to a large extent, it is expensive to implement. Some factors that lead to this confusion include corruption, ethnicity, political religion, elite and military involvement. This has a spill over effect on leadership in that the leader who comes out of this is already tainted by the mess, and the decisions to be made there-of are not as admirable or any better. Compared to the single party era in Africa, leaders at least were perceived under individual and party basis and decisions

were predicted, whether the decisions were correct or not, the expectations were low. Today, an all-inclusive political system such as democracy is supposed to provide good leadership but this still remains an illusion. In the case of Kenya, the leadership elected are selfish and mind the commoner in minimal proportions (Nebe, 2012, 59, 69). They seem worse than the single party era since their number has increased. Democracy remains an ideal political system in Africa, but it has been exploited by leaders to suit certain interests.

5.0. Recommendations

The role leaders should play in transforming Africa is based on various factors that include; Constitutionalism, checking ethnicity, justice and reconciliation, bridging the gap between the elite and working classes, fair resource distribution, checking corruption, prudent public management and employing more African oriented solutions for sustainable development.

Constitutionalism insures all under fair law and brings unity to the people, and as such leaders should defend constitutions in countries without proper constitutions should amend theirs. The rampant influence on leadership by negative ethnicity has led to underdevelopment and conflict as was the case in Rwanda, Burundi and Kenya. Leaders should embrace positive ethnicity so as to reduce and eventually end negative ethnicity through provision of justice and reconciliation and properly distribution natural resources so that all may feel included in nation building. Leaders should put effort in bridging the gap by creating wealth for the state through job creating, expanding markets, availing technology, improving the education and health sectors and infrastructural development expansion in rural areas. Corruption is noted to be a contributor to poverty. Transformative leaders should avoid corruption and put in place legal measures that check it especially in the public sector while prudent public management involves the decentralization of power and decision making, financial control and supervision in public finance and all-inclusive approach to development. Finally, the adoption of African solutions to African problems is to be adopted by leaders in the sense that it leads to sustained growth that does not depend on the other regions (Kutesa, 2009: 2), his is to be done through embracing regionalism in trade and financial assistance, industrial expansion and agricultural specialization and re-evaluation of current administrative system with view to incorporate traditional African societal management approaches.

6.0. Conclusion

Transformative leadership is what Africa needs in the 21st century. Leadership emerges through a process of interactions, with unpredictable, holistic, systemic properties and qualities (Montuori. 2010: 9). The attainment of this phenomenon must be an incremental process owing to the post-colonial history of Africa. It involves the prudent use of available resources, avoiding the blame on the west and re-dedication to the African resolution to development made during independence.

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